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ABSTRACT

One of a series of work-based interviews about occupations in Australia, this booklet presents a personal interview with a mechanical engineer, who works on offshore platforms for an oil company, about his job. The following questions are answered: what the engineer does, why the person chose the field of employment, how the person found out about the job, what he does and doesn't like about it, what kind of training was needed, what the engineer does during a working week, his co-workers, the hours, and how the work contributes to society. Cartoons are used to enliven the material, and a glossary 16 words is included. Although designed to be used in literacy classes with adult new readers, the booklets are also appropriate for use with elementary and secondary students in career exploration and career education. (KC)

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Hazel Edwards'

Workdays

a day in the life of ...

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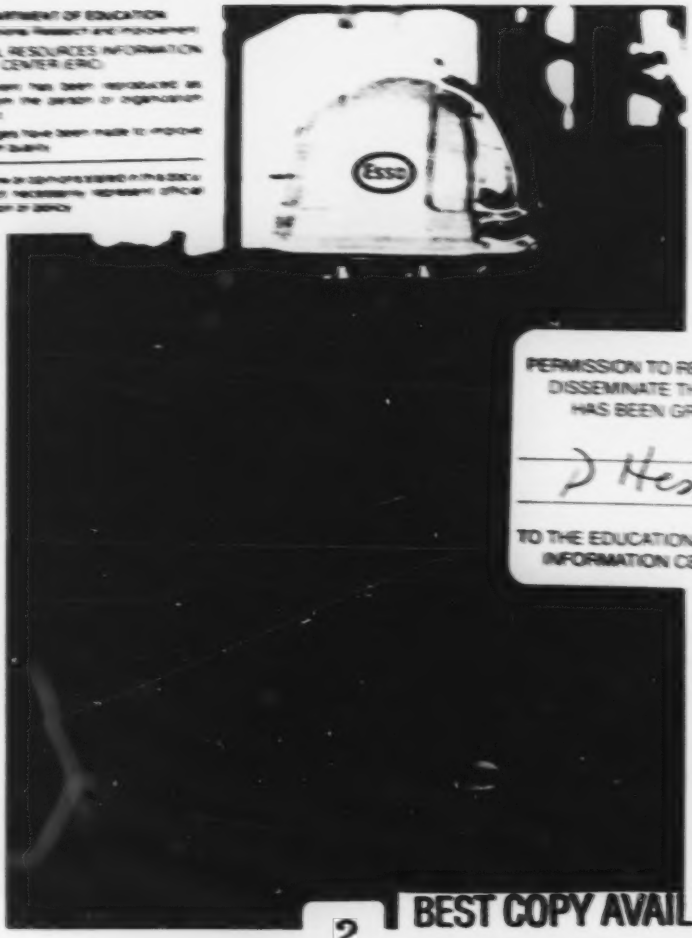

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CE 072 600

an Offshore Platform Worker

Workdays

a day in the life of ...

an Offshore Platform Worker

Name Steve Judd

Aged 29

Workdays
a day in the life of...
an Offshore Platform Worker

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WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO?

I work on an offshore oil platform. I am an *engineer*. Most people think it's an adventurous job. An oil platform is just a *crude* oil production plant. The plant is stuck out in the ocean and it's on a steel structure. But sometimes the job is very exciting.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

It's exciting when there's a drilling rig on board. It's exciting when they drill for new oil. And it's exciting when the wells come on. Sometimes the wells perform better than expected. I like going out and doing the job. Engineers do not work full-time on the platform. My job is an on-shore position too. Some people work full-time on the platform.

BURP
CRUDE OIL WORKERS
WILL GOLDWIN

ARE THERE MANY DIFFERENT JOBS ON THE PLATFORM?

Supervisors, cooks, operators and maintenance staff work full-time on the platform. Usually there are 6-30 full-time people on the platform. When construction is going on, there are up to 80 people on board. Sometimes there are drilling *contractors* on board. Sometimes they're *modifying* something. Then the numbers go up.

I used to be a design engineer. I designed modifications to the platform. I had to inspect the site. During a major project, I'd be out on the platform for five days a week. But then I wouldn't go out for the rest of the month. On average, I'd go offshore about once a week.

WHAT DOES WORK MEAN TO YOU?

People rely on me. Sometimes there's stress. But work as a machinery engineer is so interesting. It keeps me busy all the time. It must be done right. This is the challenge.

CODE RED! CODE RED AT THE COFFEE RETICULATION APPARATUS - LEVEL 12!... CODE RED!!!
WILL GOODWIN
SUGS

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS JOB?

As a kid I tinkered with cars. We had a fifty dollar FC Holden in the backyard. It was towed away. It never got on the road.

My girlfriend's father was a *mechanic* and I knew other mechanics too. At that stage, I wanted to earn some money. I also wanted to do something which interested me. So I chose a mechanical *trade*.

During my schooling it was more 'cool' to be a trades type person than to go to university. So I did an *apprenticeship*. I became a heavy vehicle mechanic. I did a lot of post-trade courses, even while I did my apprenticeship. I liked *technical* things. So I went to university. I got a degree in mechanical engineering.

Then I did my *vacation* work with Altona Petrochemical Company in Melbourne. That work interested me a lot and I enjoyed my time there. But the plant was only one kilometre square. I would have to spend the rest of my working life in that small area. I didn't like the idea of that.

HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THE OFFSHORE PLATFORM WORK?

Esso came to the university. I went to their information session. They showed slides of the oil platforms. They interviewed me. Then I came home and talked to my wife. She was working as a clerk at the bank. The Esso job would mean moving to Sale. She was prepared to move, for a change. But it would be hard for her to get a similar job in Sale. They offered me a second interview.

So I visited Sale. I took photographs of all the bad bits. But my wife was still willing to go if I liked it. Apart from work offshore, Esso move people around. They have oil *exploration* areas all over the world. Mechanical design engineer was the job they offered me. It was what I wanted at the time. I talked it over with my wife. Then I accepted.

ARE THERE OTHER JOBS ON THE PLATFORM?

Offshore, there are a lot of trades. These include fitters, instrument technicians and electricians. Ways of running the platform are changing. The company encourages more multi-skilling. Workers learn to do several jobs. Lots of trades people want to work offshore for a couple of years. Then they want to move on. But others get used to the *lifestyle*. They get used to the pay. There are five or six jobs for fitters out in Bass Strait. They are a roving team. They fix up compressors and pumps. They move from platform to platform. This is more interesting work.

On the platform, a fitter would just maintain machines. He might make small modifications too. The instrument and electrical work is more interesting. The whole platform is controlled by computer systems.

Esso tries to employ apprentices from the local area. There are hundreds on the waiting list. The pay and conditions are very good. Seven days on and seven days off is the normal *shift*.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO DURING A WEEK?

Machinery engineer is my job. I've been doing this job for about a year. I start about 8.15 in the morning.

We have an electronic mail system on the computer. So I deal with problems sent by others. That takes about an hour or so. I'm responsible for a list of projects from when I was a design engineer. Now they are mainly about looking after the machinery offshore.

I'm responsible for all the compressors and pumps offshore. These are our main production gas compressors. These are also our oil production pumps. I have a list of pumps and compressors causing problems. Or they might need upgrading.

Or if we're putting in new ones off-shore, I oversee the technical side. We're going to upgrade the engines on the gas compressors. This is to get more horse power. We want to modify the compressors so they use that horse power better. I have to contact the manufacturer of the compressor. I talk to them about possible restaging of the compressors themselves. I use the phone and the fax machine.

Then I'd discuss projects with other *surveillance* engineers. There are a series of about six surveillance engineers. Each is responsible for what happens on his platforms. There are fourteen platforms and two unmanned *mono* towers in Bass Strait. We work together.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE YOUR CO-WORKERS?

Very important. Engineers need technical knowledge. They also need to look after details. You have to listen to people from different backgrounds. They may be electrical or chemical engineers.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT BRIAN...
HE'S JUST AN ELTON JOHN NUT
IN NEED OF SOME
SHORE-
LEAVE...
WILL GOODWIN.

You need to understand all the details. You have to be able to get on with people. This is a large company with a wide variety of people. Some people offshore don't like engineers.

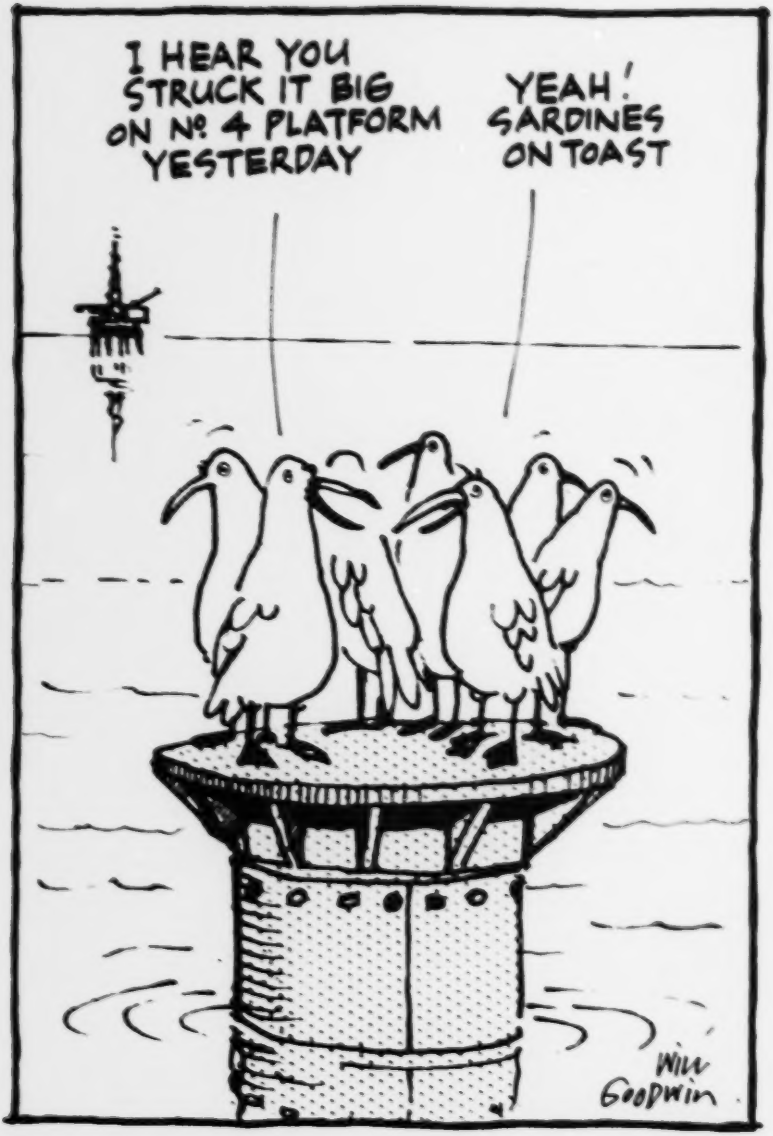
Let's face it. Some engineers come out of school and think they can run the world. That's wrong.

You have to see things the way others on the platform see things. Lots of times they are right.

ARE YOUR FRIENDS MOSTLY WORKMATES?

We live in a country town. Many of our friends are work people.

We still have friends interstate. But some friendships are a matter of where you live.


I HEAR YOU STRUCK IT BIG ON Nº 4 PLATFORM YESTERDAY
YEAH! SARDINES ON TOAST
Will Goodwin

ARE THERE MANY CHANGES IN YOUR WORKPLACE?

There are changes all the time. Companies sell us new machines. As soon as their *research* engineers develop something new, we use it.

WHEN DO YOU WORK?

Clerks and union staff have certain hours. They are paid overtime if they work longer. My work times vary. Usually I arrive between 7.30 and 8.15 am. I leave about 4.45 pm. But sometimes we get so involved, we put in extra hours. I might be still here at 6.30 at night. If jobs have to be done, we might go offshore on Sunday night. Or we might stay over on Friday night and come in on a Saturday. Usually we get time off if we do work extra. Sometimes we have to work Saturday and Sunday.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT YOUR WORK?

I like seeing jobs finished. Sometimes it's hard to finish a job.

The company swaps people around a lot and some jobs are so big. One of my projects was worth 20 million dollars. I was the mechanical design engineer.

I came into the project half way through the design stage after someone else left. That was hard for him.

I followed through the design, the construction and the *commissioning*. I liked seeing that job finished. I like starting up new machinery. I like knowing that it's working well because of my work.

ARE YOU WELL PAID?

The oil industry is competitive. Our salaries are in the top 25% of similar companies. The pay is quite good. So there's not much I'd like to change.

DOES YOUR WORK HELP OTHERS?

Our work helps Australia to have its own oil and gas. We can see direct results of my work. Last week, I did a test on one of the compressors.
It wasn't working properly so I looked at the computer. The computer shows how the compressors should be working. It wasn't working well enough.

So, our people went out and changed it over. The oil production increased. This time, it increased 200,000 litres per day. That's pretty good.

IF YOU COULD START AGAIN, WOULD YOU CHOOSE THIS JOB?

Yes! I've never looked back. From being a mechanic to engineering was an excellent move. I like to get out and do something practical. I can't imagine doing anything else.

GLOSSARY

engineer	*constructs or uses machinery or power*
crude	*raw or natural state*
contractor	*worker who agrees to do certain work*
modifying	*changing*
mechanic	*works with machines*
trade	*work*
apprenticeship	*learning a trade over a set period of time*
technical	*way or means of operating the trade*
vacation	*holiday time*
exploration	*search*
lifestyle	*way of life*
shift	*set work hours*
surveillance	*oversee*
mono	*single*
research	*studying new facts or new knowledge*
commissioning	*the ordering of the job*

Workdays is based on real people in real jobs. The aim of the series is to provide simply written, interesting and relevant material for new readers.

Author Hazel Edwards' method of researching is by interview and visiting the workplace.

Her previous one hundred books have included adult literacy, scripts, non-fiction, crime and childrens books. Currently she is researching other workplaces for more books in the ' day in a life of ' series.

Gardner : franchisee	Police
the Chef	Customs Officer
Vet Nurse	Family Garage Owner
Computer Salesman	Fruiterer
Offshore Platform Worker	Plumber
(current series)	(in production)

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